A

SERMON

PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE,

BEFORE THE

AUDIENCE OF HIS HONOR

THOMAS HUTCHINSON, Esq;

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF,

THE HONORABLE

HIS MAJESTY'S COUNCIL,

AND THE HONORABLE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

OF THE PROVINCE OF THE

Massachusetts-Bay in *New-England*,

MAY 30th, 1770.

BEING THE ANNIVERSARY FOR THE ELECTION OF HIS MAJESTY'S COUNCIL FOR THE SAID PROVINCE.

BY SAMUEL COOKE, A.M.

Pastor of the Second Church in CAMBRIDGE.

BOSTON:

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MDCCLXX.

BRITISH MUSEUM

In the House of *Representatives*,
May 30, 1770.

RESOLVED, That Mr. *Gardner* of *Cambridge*, Mr. *Remington*, and Mr. *Gardner* of *Stow*, be a Committee to return the Thanks of this House to the Rev'd Mr. *Samuel Cooke*, for his Sermon preached Yesterday before the General Court, being the Day of the Election of Councellors; and to desire of him a Copy thereof for the Press.

Attest,

Samuel Adams, Clerk.

An ELECTION-SERMON.

2 SAM. XXIII. 3, 4.

——*HE that ruleth over Men, muſt be juſt, ruling in the fear of* GOD.

And he ſhall be as the light of the morning when the ſun riſeth, even a morning without clouds: as the tender graſs ſpringing out of the earth by clear ſhining after rain.

THE ſolemn introduction to the words now read, Reſpectable Hearers, is manifeſtly deſigned to engage your attention and regard;—as given by inſpiration from God,—and as containing the laſt—the dying words, of one of the greateſt and beſt of earthly rulers;—who by ruling in the fear of God, had ſerved his generation according to the Divine will.——

Tranſporting

Tranſporting reflection!—when his fleſh and his heart failed, and his glory was conſigned to duſt.

From this, and many other paſſages, in the ſacred oracles, it is evident, that the ſupreme Ruler, tho' he has directed to no particular mode of civil government, yet allows and approves of the eſtabliſhment of it among men.

The ends of civil government, in Divine revelation are clearly pointed out—The character of rulers deſcribed,—and the duty of ſubjects aſſerted and explained. And in this view, civil government may be conſidered as an ordinance of God; and when juſtly exerciſed, greatly ſubſervient to the glorious purpoſes of divine providence and grace.—But the particular form is left to the choice and determination of mankind.

In a pure ſtate of nature, government is in a great meaſure unneceſſary; private property in that ſtate is inconſiderable, men need no arbiter to determine their rights,—they covet only a bare ſupport,—their ſtock is but the ſubſiſtence of a day,—the uncultivated deſarts are their habitations,—and they carry their all with them, in their frequent

quent removes—they are each one a law to himſelf, which in general, is of force ſufficient for their ſecurity, in that courſe of life.

It is far otherwiſe when mankind are formed into collective bodies, or a ſocial ſtate of life;—here, their frequent mutual intercourſe, in a degree, neceſſarily leads them to different apprehenſions, reſpecting their ſeveral rights, even where their intentions are upright.—Temptations to injuſtice and violence increaſe, and the occaſions of them multiply, in proportion to the increaſe and opulence of the ſociety.

The laws of nature, though enforced by Divine revelation, which bind the conſcience of the upright, prove inſufficient to reſtrain the ſons of violence, who have not the fear of God before their eyes.

A ſociety cannot long ſubſiſt in ſuch a ſtate.—Their ſafety,—their ſocial being depends upon the eſtabliſhment of determinate rules or laws, with proper penalties to enforce them; to which individuals ſhall be ſubjected;—The laws, however wiſely adapted, cannot operate to the public ſecurity, unleſs they are properly executed;—The execution of them, remaining in the hands

of

of the whole community, leaves individuals to determine their own rights, and in effect, in the ſame circumſtances, as in a ſtate of nature.

The remedy in this caſe is ſolely in the hands of the community.

A ſociety emerging from a ſtate of nature, in reſpect to authority, are all upon a level, —no individual can juſtly challenge a right to make, or execute the laws, by which it is to be governed, but only by the choice, or general conſent of the community.——The people, the collective body, only have a right, under God, to determine who ſhall exerciſe this truſt for the common intereſt, and to fix the bounds of their authority.

And conſequently, unleſs we admit the moſt evident inconſiſtence, thoſe in authority, in the whole of their public conduct, are accountable to the ſociety, which gave them their political exiſtence.

This is evidently the natural origin, and ſtate of all civil government,—the ſole end and deſign of which is, not to ennoble a few, and enſlave the multitude, but the public benefit,—the good of the people,——

that

that they may be protected in their perſons, and ſecured in the enjoyment of all their rights,—and be enabled to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty.

While this manifeſt deſign of civil government, under whatever form, is kept in full view; the reciprocal obligations of rulers and ſubjects are obvious, and the extent of prerogative and liberty, will be indiſputable.

In a civil ſtate, that form is the moſt eligible which is beſt adapted to promote the ends of government,—the benefit of the community;—reaſon and experience teach that a mixed government is moſt conducive to this end.

In the preſent imperfect ſtate, the whole power cannot with ſafety be entruſted with a ſingle perſon; nor with many, acting jointly in the ſame public capacity.

Various branches of power, concentring in the community from which they originally derive their authority, are a mutual check to each other, in their ſeveral departments, and jointly ſecure the common intereſt: This may indeed, in ſome inſtances, re-

tard the operations of government, but will add dignity to its deliberate counſels, and weight to its dictates.

This, after many dangerous conflicts with arbitrary power, is now the happy conſtitution of our parent ſtate.—We rejoice in the gladneſs of our nation,—may no weapon formed againſt it proſper—may it be preſerved inviolate till time ſhall be no more.

This, under God, has cauſed Great Britain to exalt her head above the nations—reſtored the dignity of royal authority—and rendered our Kings truly benefactors.

The Prince upon the Britiſh throne can have no real intereſt diſtinct from his ſubjects; his crown is his inheritance—his kingdom his patrimony, which he muſt be diſpoſed to improve, for his own, and his family's intereſt—his higheſt glory is to rule over a free people, and reign in the hearts of his ſubjects—The Peers who are lords of parliament, are his hereditary council.—The Commons, elected by the people, are conſidered as the grand inqueſt of the kingdom; and while incorrupt, are a check upon the higheſt offices in the ſtate.

A conſtitution thus happily formed and ſupported, as a late writer has obſerved, cannot eaſily be ſubverted, but by the prevalence of venality in the repreſentatives of the people.

How far ſeptennial parliaments conduce to this, time may further ſhew.——Or whether this is not an infraction upon the national conſtitution, is not for me to determine.

But the beſt conſtitution, ſeparately conſidered, is only as a line which marks out the incloſure, or as a fitly organized body without ſpirit or animal life.

The advantages of civil government, even under the Britiſh form, greatly depend upon the character and conduct of thoſe to whom the adminiſtration is committed.

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

The Moſt High, therefore, who is juſt in all his ways--good to all--- and whoſe commands ſtrike dread, has ſtrictly enjoined faithfulneſs upon all thoſe who are advanced to any place of public truſt.

Rulers of this character, co-operate with God, in his gracious diſpenſations of providence, and under him, are diffuſive bleſſings to the people:—and are compared to the light of the morning, when the ſun riſeth, even a morning without clouds.

By the ruler in the text, is intended not only the King as ſupreme; but alſo every one in ſubordinate place of power and truſt, whether they act in a legiſlative or executive capacity, or both:—In whatever ſtation men act for the public, they are included in this general term——and muſt direct their conduct by the ſame upright principle.

Juſtice as here expreſſed, is not to be taken in a limited ſenſe, but as a general term, including every quality neceſſary to be exerciſed for the public good, by thoſe who accept the charge of it.

Juſtice muſt be tempered with wiſdom, prudence and clemency; otherwiſe it will degenerate into rigor and oppreſſion.

This ſolemn charge given to rulers, is not an arbitrary injunction impoſed by God; but is founded in the moſt obvious laws of nature and reaſon.

Rulers

Rulers are appointed for this very end—*to be miniſters of God for good.*—The people have a right to expect this from them, and to require it, not as an act of grace, but as their unqueſtionable due.—It is the expreſs or implicit condition, upon which they were choſen, and continued in public office,—that they attend continually upon this very thing.

Their time—their abilities—their authority, by their acceptance of the public truſt, are conſecrated to the community, and cannot, in juſtice, be with-held;—they are obliged to ſeek the welfare of the people, and exert all their powers to promote the common intereſt.

This continual ſolicitude for the common good, however depreſſing it may appear, is what rulers of every degree have taken upon themſelves; and in juſtice to the people, —in faithfulneſs to God, they muſt either ſuſtain it with fidelity, or reſign their office.

The firſt attention of the faithful ruler will be to the ſubjects of government, in their ſpecific nature;—He will not forget that he ruleth over *Men*—Men, who are of the ſame ſpecies with himſelf, and by nature equal—

equal—Men who are the offspring of God, and alike formed after his glorious image—Men of like paſſions and feelings with himſelf, and as men, in the ſight of their common Creator of equal importance—Men who have raiſed him to power, and ſupport him in the exerciſe of it—Men who are reaſonable beings, and can be ſubjected to no human reſtrictions, which are not founded in reaſon; and of the fitneſs of which they may be convinced—Men, who are moral agents, and under the abſolute controul of the High Poſſeſſor of heaven and earth; and cannot, without the greateſt impropriety and diſloyalty to the King of kings, yield unlimited ſubjection to any inferior power—Men whom the Son of God hath condeſcended to ranſom, and dignified their nature, by becoming the ſon of man.

Men, who have the moſt evident right, in every decent way, to repreſent to rulers their grievances, and ſeek redreſs.

The people forfeit the rank they hold in God's creation, when they ſilently yield this important point, and ſordidly, like Iſſachar, couch under every burden wantonly laid upon them.

And

And rulers greatly tarnish their dignity, when they attempt to treat their subjects otherwise than as their fellow-men.——Men who have reposed the highest confidence in their fidelity; and to whom they are accountable for their public conduct.——And in a word, Men, among whom they must, without distinction, stand before the dread tribunal of heaven.

Just rulers therefore in making and executing the laws of society, will consider who they are to oblige, and accommodate them to the state and condition of men.

Fidelity to the public, requires that the laws be as plain and explicit as possible; that the less knowing may understand and not be ensnared by them—while the artful evade their force.

Mysteries of law and government may be made a cloak of unrighteousness.

The benefits of the constitution, and of the laws, must extend to every branch, and each individual in society, of whatever degree; that every man may enjoy his property, and pursue his honest course of life with security.

The

The juſt ruler, ſenſible he is in truſt for the public, with an impartial hand, will ſupply the various offices in ſociety:——his eye will be upon the faithful—merit only in the candidate, will attract his attention.

He will not, without ſufficient reaſon, multiply lucrative offices in the community; which naturally tends to introduce idleneſs and oppreſſion.

Juſtice requires, that the emoluments of every office, conſtituted for the common intereſt, be proportioned to their dignity, and the ſervice performed, for the public: —Parſimony in this caſe, enervates the force of government, and fruſtrates the moſt patriotic meaſures. A people therefore for their own ſecurity, muſt be ſuppoſed willing to pay tribute to whom it is due, and freely ſupport the dignity of thoſe under whoſe protection they confide.

On the other hand, the people may apprehend they have juſt reaſon to complain of oppreſſion and wrong, and to be jealous of their liberties, when ſubordinate public offices are made the ſureſt ſtep to wealth and eaſe.

This

This not only encreaſes the expences of government, but is naturally productive of diſſipation and luxury—of the ſeverest animoſities among candidates for public poſts, —and of venality and corruption; the moſt fatal to a free ſtate.

Rulers are appointed guardians of the conſtitution, in their reſpective ſtations; and muſt confine themſelves within the limits by which their authority is circumſcribed.

A free ſtate will no longer continue ſo, than while the conſtitution is maintained entire, in all its branches and connections.—If the ſeveral members of the legiſlative power become entirely independent of each other, it produceth a ſchiſm in the body politic; and the effect is the ſame, when the executive is in no degree under the controul of the legiſlative power,—the balance is deſtroyed, and the execution of the laws left to arbitrary will.

The ſeveral branches of civil power, as joint pillars, each bearing its due proportion, are the ſupport, and the only proper ſupport of a political ſtructure, regularly formed.

a conſtitution which cannot ſupport its own weight, muſt fall—It muſt be ſuppoſed eſſentially defective in its form or adminiſtration.

Military aid has ever been deemed dangerous to a free civil ſtate; and often has been uſed as an effectual engine to ſubvert it.

Thoſe, who in the camp, and in the field of battle, are our glory and defence; from the experience of other nations, will be thought, in time of peace, a very improper ſafe-guard, to a conſtitution, which has Liberty—Britiſh Liberty, for its baſis.

When a people are in ſubjection to thoſe, who are detached from their fellow citizens, —under diſtinct laws and rules—ſupported in idleneſs and luxury—armed with the terrors of death—under the moſt abſolute command—ready and obliged to execute the moſt daring orders——What muſt!—what has been the conſequence!——

Inter arma ſilent leges.——

Juſtice alſo requires of rulers, in their legiſlative capacity, that they attend to the operation of their own acts; and repeal whatever

whatever laws, upon an impartial review, they find to be inconsistent with the laws of God—the rights of men—and the general benefit of society.

This the community hath a right to expect. And they must have mistaken apprehensions of true dignity, who imagine they can acquire or support it, by persisting in wrong measures; and thereby counteracting the sole end of government.

It belongs to the all-seeing God alone, absolutely to be of one mind. It is the glory of man, in whatever station, to perceive and correct his mistakes.

Arrogant pretences to infallibility in matters of state or religion, represent human nature in the most contemptible light.

We have a view of our nature in its most abject state, when we read the senseless laws of the Medes and Persians, or hear the impotent thunders of the Vatican.

Stability in promoting the public good, which justice demands, leads to a change of measures, when the interest of the commu-

nity requires it; which muſt often be the caſe in this mutable---imperfect ſtate.

The juſt ruler will not fear to have his public conduct critically inſpected; but will chooſe to recommend himſelf to the approbation of every man.---As he expects to be obeyed for conſcience ſake, he will require nothing inconſiſtent with its dictates; and be deſirous that the moſt ſcrupulous mind may acquieſce in the juſtice of his rule.

As in his whole adminiſtration, ſo in this, he will be ambitious to imitate the ſupreme Ruler---who appeals to his people, Are not my ways equal?

Knowing therefore that his conduct will bear the light, and his public character be eſtabliſhed by being fully known—He will rather encourage than diſcountenance a decent freedom of ſpeech, not only in public aſſemblies, but among the people.

This liberty is eſſential to a free conſtitution, and the ruler's ſureſt guide.

As in nature we beſt judge of cauſes by their effects—So rulers, hereby—will receive the ſureſt information of the fitneſs of their laws,

laws, and the exactneſs of their execution,—the ſucceſs of their meaſures—and whether they are chargeable with any miſtakes, from partial evidence or human frailty——and whether, all acting under them, in any ſubordinate place, expreſs the fidelity, becoming their office.

This decent liberty the juſt ruler will conſider not as his grant, but a right inherent in the people, without which their obedience is rendered merely paſſive.

And tho', poſſibly, under a juſt adminiſtration, it may degenerate into licentiouſneſs, which in its extreme, is ſubverſive of all government; yet the hiſtory of paſt ages, and of our nation, ſhews, that the greateſt dangers have ariſen from lawleſs power.

The body of a people are diſpoſed to lead quiet and peaceable lives—and it is their higheſt intereſt to ſupport the government under which their quietneſs is enſured—— They retain a reverence for their ſuperiors, and ſeldom foreſee or ſuſpect danger, till they feel their burdens.

Rulers of every degree, are in a meaſure above the fear of man; but are equally with

with others under the restrai[illegible] of the Divine law.

The Almighty has not diveſte[illegible] himſelf of his own abſolute authority, by per[illegible]itting ſubordinate government among men——He allows none to rule, otherwiſe, than un[illegible] him, and in his fear.—And without a true fear of God, juſtice will be found to be but an empty name.

Though reaſon may in ſome degree inveſtigate the relation and fitneſs of things, yet I think it evident, that moral obligations are founded wholly in a belief of God and his ſuperintending providence.

This belief deeply impreſſed on the mind, brings the moſt convincing evidence, that men are moral agents,—obliged to act, according to the natural and evident relation of things—and the rank they bear in God's creation——That the Divine will, however made known to them, is the law by which all their actions muſt be regulated, and their ſtate finally determined.

[illegible]lers may in a degree be influenced to [illegible] for the public good, from education—[illegible]rom a deſire of applauſe—from the natural benevolence

benevolence of their temper? But these motives are feeble and inconstant, without the superior aids of religion. They are men of like passions with others, and the true fear of God only, is sufficient to controul the lusts of men; and especially the lust of dominion—to suppress pride—the bane of every desirable quality in the human soul—the never-failing source of wanton and capricious power.

So did not I—said the renowned governor of Judah—*because of the fear of God.*

He had nothing to fear from the people:—His commission he received from the luxurious Persian court, where the voice of distress was not heard—where no sad countenance might appear.—But he feared his God.—This moved him to hear the cries of his people, and without delay, redress their wrongs.——He knew this was pleasing to his God, and while he acted in his fear, trusted he would think upon him for good.

This fear doth not intend, simply, a dread of the Almighty, as the supreme Ruler and Judge of men—but especially, a filial reverence, founded in esteem and superlative love implanted in the heart:—This will naturally

turally produce a conformity to God in his moral perfections--an inclination to do his will--and a delight in those acts of beneficence which the Maker of all things displays throughout his extended creation.

This fear of God is the beginning, and also the perfection of human wisdom.

And tho' dominion is not, absolutely, founded in grace; yet a true principle of religion must be considered as a necessary qualification in a ruler.

The religion of Jesus teacheth the true fear of God, and marvellously discloseth, the plan of Divine government;——

In his gospel, as thro' a glass, we see heaven opened---the mysteries of providence and grace unveiled---Jesus sitting on the right hand of God,---to whom all power is committed,---and coming to judge the world in righteousness.

Here is discovered to the admiration of angels—the joy of saints, and the terror of the wicked; the government of the man Christ Jesus, founded in justice and mercy; which

which in his glorious administration meet together in perfect harmony.

The sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre; he loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness.

And tho' his throne is on high—prepared in the heavens; yet he makes known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.——By him kings reign, and princes decree justice, even all the nobles and judges of the earth.——His eyes are upon the ways of men—His voice which is full of majesty, to earthly potentates, is, be wise now, O ye kings! be instructed, ye judges of the earth—serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice in your exalted stations with submissive awe—embrace the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.

The christian temper, wrought in the heart by the Divine Spirit, restores the human mind to its primitive rectitude,—animates every faculty of the soul—directs every action to its proper end—extends its views beyond the narrow limits of time, and raises its desires to immortal glory.

This makes the face of every saint to shine; but renders the ruler, in his elevated station, gloriously resplendent.

This commands reverence to his person—attention to his counsels—respect to the laws—and authority to all his directions.—And renders an obedient people easy and happy under his rule.

Which leads to the consideration of the last thing suggested in the text, viz. The glorious effects of a just administration of government.

And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds—as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.

This includes, both the distinguishing honor and respect acquired by rulers of this character; and the unspeakable felicity of a people thus favored of the Lord.

Justice and judgment are the habitation of the throne of the Most High; and he delighteth to honor those who rule over men in his fear—He has dignified them with

a title of divinity—and called them in a peculiar sense, the children of the Highest.

And we are not to wonder, that in the darker ages of the world, from worshipping the host of heaven, the ignorant multitude were led to pay divine honors to their beneficent rulers—whom they esteemed as demi-gods.

The light of Divine revelation has dispelled these mists of superstition and impiety, and opened to the pious ruler's view, the sure prospect of unfading glory in the life to come:—And in the present state he is not without a reward.

To find that his conduct meets with public approbation,—that he is acceptable to the multitude of his brethren, greatly corroborates his internal evidence of his own integrity and impartiality,—and especially, of his ability for public action.—And which is the height of his ambition in this state of probation,—enlarges his opportunity of doing good.

The shouts of applause, not from fordid parasites, but the grateful,—the artless multitude, the pious ruler receives as the voice

of nature—the voice of God.—This is his support under the weight of government, and fixes his dependence upon the aid of the Almighty, in whose fear he rules.

How excellent in the sight of God and man, are rulers of this character!

Truly the light is good, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun—Thus desirable—thus benign, are wise and faithful rulers to a people. The beautiful allusion in the text naturally illustrates this.

The Sun, as the center of the solar system, connects the planetary worlds, and retains them in their respective orbits: They all yield to the greater force of his attractive power,—and thus with the greatest regularity observe the laws, impressed upon the material creation.

The Ruler of the day, as on his throne, shining in his strength, nearly preserves his station, and under the prime agent, directs all their motions—imparting light and heat to his several attendants, and the various beings which the Creator has placed upon them.

them. His refulgent rays diſpel the gloomy ſhades, and cauſe the cheerful light to ariſe out of thick darkneſs, and all nature to rejoice.

The Planets, with their leſſer attendants, in conformity to their common head, mutually reflect with feeble beams their borrowed light for the common benefit; and all, in proportion to their diſtance and gravity bear their part, to ſupport the balance in the grand machine.

By this apt allegory the Divine Spirit has repreſented the character and extenſive influences of the faithful ruler,—who with a God-like ardor employs his authority and influence to advance the common intereſt.

The righteous Lord, whoſe countenance beholdeth the upright, will ſupport and ſucceed rulers of this character. And it is an evidence of his favor to a people, when ſuch are appointed to rule over them.

The natural effect of this is quietneſs and peace, as ſhowers upon the tender graſs, and clear ſhining after rain.

In

In this case a loyal people must be happy, and fully sensible that they are so—while they find their persons in safety—their liberties preserved—their property defended,—and their confidence in their rulers entire.

The necessary expences of government will be born by the community with pleasure, while justice holds the balance, and righteousness flows down their streets.

Such a civil state, according to the natural course of things, must flourish in peace at home, and be respectable abroad—private virtues will be encouraged, and vice driven into darkness—industry in the most effectual manner promoted—arts and sciences patronized—the true fear of God cultivated,—and his worship maintained.

This,—this is their only invaluable treasure.—This is the glory, safety and best interest of rulers—the sure protection and durable felicity of a people.—This, thro' the Redeemer, renders the Almighty propitious, and nigh unto a people in all they call upon him for.

Happy must the people be, that is in such a case—Yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord.

But

But the affairs of this important day demand our more immediate attention.

With ſincere gratitude to our Almighty Preſerver, we ſee the return of this Anniverſary; and the leaders of this people aſſembled, (tho' not according to the general deſire, in the city of our ſolemnities)—to aſk counſel of God; and as we truſt, in the integrity of their hearts, and by the ſkillfulneſs of their hands, to lead us in ways of righteouſneſs and peace.

The ſeaſon indeed is dark; but God is our ſun and ſhield.

When we conſider the days of old, and the years of ancient time,—the ſcene brightens,—our hopes revive.

Our Fathers truſted in God,—He was their help and their ſhield.

Theſe ever memorable worthies, nearly a century and an half ſince, by the prevalence of ſpiritual and civil tyranny, were driven from their delightful native land, to ſeek a quiet retreat in theſe uncultivated ends of the earth.

And however doubtful it might appear to them or others, whether the lands they were going to poſſeſs, were properly under the Engliſh juriſdiction; yet our anceſtors were deſirous of retaining a relation to their native country, and to be conſidered as ſubjects of the ſame prince.

"They left their native land, with the ſtrongeſt aſſurances, that they and their poſterity ſhould enjoy the privileges of free natural-born Engliſh ſubjects; which they ſuppoſed fully comprehended in their charter. The powers of government therein confirmed to them, they conſidered as including Engliſh liberty in its full extent.

And however defective their charter might be in form, a thing common in that day,—yet the ſpirit and evident intention of it, appears to be then underſtood.

The reſerve therein made of paſſing no laws contrary to thoſe of the parent ſtate, was then conſidered as a concluſive evidence of their full power, under that reſtriction only, to enact whatever laws they ſhould judge conducive to their benefit.

Our

Our Fathers supposed their purchase of the aboriginals, gave them a just title to the lands—that the produce of them by their labour, was their property, which they had an exclusive right to dispose of—that a legislative power, respecting their internal polity, was ratified to them—and that nothing short of this considering their local circumstances, could entitle them or their posterity to the rights and liberties of free, native born English subjects.

And it does not appear but that this was the general sentiment of the nation, and parliament.

They did not then view their American adventurers, in the light ancient Rome did, her distant colonies; as tributaries, unjustly subjected to arbitrary rule by the dread of force of her victorious arms.—But as sons, arrived to mature age—entitled to distinct property, yet connected by mutual ties of affection and interest, and united under the common supreme head.

The New-England Charter, was not considered, as an act of grace, but a compact, between the Sovereign and the first patentees.

Our Fathers plead their right to the privilege of it, in their address to King Charles the second;—wherein they say—"It was granted to them, their heirs, assigns, and associates for ever; not only the absolute use and propriety of the tract of land therein mentioned; but also full and absolute power of governing all the people of this place, by men chosen from among themselves, and according to such laws as they shall from time to time see meet to make and establish, not being repugnant to the laws of England—They paying only the fifth part of the oar of gold and silver, that shall be found here—for and in respect of all duties, demands, exactions and services whatsoever." And from an apprehension, that the powers given by the crown to the four commissioners sent here, were in effect subversive of their rights and government—they add, "We are carefully studious of all due subjection to your Majesty, and that not only for wrath, but for conscience sake."

"But it is a great unhappiness to be reduced to so hard a case, as to have no other testimony of our subjection and loyalty offered us but this, viz. to destroy our own being, which nature teacheth us to preserve; or to yield up our liberties, which are far

dearer to us than our lives — and which, had we any fears of being deprived of, we had never wandered from our fathers houses into these ends of the earth — nor laid out our labors and estates therein."

But all their humble addresses were to no purpose.

As an honorable historian observes — "At this time Great-Britain, and Scotland, especially, was suffering under a prince inimical to civil liberty: And New-England without a miraculous interposition, must expect to share the same judgments." And indeed of this bitter cup, the dregs were reserved for this people, in that and the succeeding happily short, but inglorious reign.

Our Charter was dissolved, and despotic power took place.

Sir Edmund Andros — a name never to be forgotten — in imitation of his Royal Master, in wanton triumph, trampled upon all our laws and rights. — And his government was only tolerable, as it was a deliverance from the shocking terrors of the more infamous Kirk.

Sir Edmund at first made high professions of regard to the public good—But it had been observed,—"that Nero concealed his tyrannical disposition more years than Sir Edmund and his creatures did months."

But the triumphing of the wicked is often short.

The glorious revolution, under the Prince of Orange, displayed a brighter scene to Great-Britain, and her colonies. And tho' no part of its extended empire did bear a greater part in the joy of that memorable event than this province; yet it was then apprehended we were not the greatest sharers in the happy effects of it.

I trust we are not insensible of the blessings we then received, nor unthankful for our deliverance from the depths of woe.

We submitted to the form of government established under our present Charter—trusting, under God, in the wisdom and paternal tenderness of our gracious Sovereign.—That in all appointments reserved to the crown, a sacred regard would be maintained to the rights of British subjects;—and that the royal ear would always be open to every reasonable request and complaint. It

It is far from my intention to determine whether there has been just reason for uneasiness or complaint on this account——But with all submission, I presume the present occasion will permit me to say,——That the importance of his Majesty's Council to this people appears in a more conspicuous light, since the endeavors which have been used, to render this invaluable branch of our constitution, wholly dependent upon the chair.

Should this ever be the case, which God forbid——Liberty here will cease.——This day of the gladness of our hearts, will be turned into the deepest sorrow.

The authority and influence of his Majesty's Council, in various respects, while happily free from restraints, is momentous: our well being greatly depends upon their wisdom and integrity.

The concern of electing to this important trust, wise and faithful men, belongeth to our Honored Fathers now in General Assembly convened.

Men of this character we trust are to be found, and upon such, and only such, we presume will the eye of the electors be this day.

It

It is with pleasure that we see the choice in the hands of a very respectable part of the community, and nearly interested in the effects of it.

But our reliance, Fathers, under God, is upon your acting in his fear. God standeth in the assembly of the mighty, and perfectly discerns the motives by which you act——May his fear rule in your hearts, and unerring counsel be your guide.

You have received a sure token of respect, by your being raised to this high trust; but true honor is acquired only by acting in character.

Honor yourselves, Gentlemen,—Honor the council-board---your country---your king---and your God, by the choice you this day make.

You will attentively consider the true design of all civil government; and without partiality, give your voice for those you judge most capable and disposed to promote the public interest.---Then you will have the satisfaction of having faithfully discharged

your

your trust--and be sure of the approbation of the Most High.

The chief command, in this province, is now devolved upon one of distinguished abilities, who knows our state, and naturally, must care for us--One, who in early life has received from his country the highest tokens of honor and trust, in its power to bestow. And we have a right to expect, that the higher degrees of them conferred by our gracious Sovereign, will operate thro' the course of his administration, to the welfare of this people.

His Honor is not insensible, that as his power is independent of the people, their safety must depend, under providence, upon his wisdom,---justice, and paternal tenderness, in the exercise of it.

It is our ardent wish and prayer, that his administration may procure ease and quietness to himself, and the province.---And having served his generation according to the Divine will,---he may rise to superior honors in the kingdom of God.

When the elections of this important day are determined---what farther remains to be

undertaken

undertaken for the securing our liberties, promoting peace and good order, and above all—the advancement of religion—the true fear of God thro' the land, will demand the highest attention of the General Assembly.

We trust the fountain of light, who giveth wisdom freely, will not scatter darkness in your paths; and that the day is far distant, when there shall be cause justly to complain—The foundations are destroyed; what can the righteous do?

Our present distresses, Civil Fathers, loudly call upon us all, and you in special, to stir up ourselves in the fear of God.—Arise, this matter belongeth unto you, we also will be with you, be of good courage and do it.

Whether any other laws are necessary for this purpose; or whether there is a failure in the execution of the laws in being, I presume not to say.—But with all due respect, I may be permitted to affirm, that no human authority can enforce the practice of religion with equal success to your example.

Your example, Fathers, not only in your public administrations, but also in private life, will be the most forcible law—the most effectual

fectual means to teach us the fear of the Lord, and to depart from evil.

Then, and not till then, ſhall we be free indeed--being delivered from the dominion of ſin, we become the true ſons of God.

The extent of the ſecular power, in matters of religion, is undetermined;—but all agree,—that the example of thoſe in authority, has the greateſt influence upon the manners of the people.

We are far from pleading for any eſtabliſhed mode of worſhip; but an operative fear of God--the honor of the Redeemer; the everlaſting King—according to his goſpel.

We whoſe peculiar charge it is to inſtruct the people, preach to little purpoſe, while thoſe in an advanced ſtate, by their practice ſay—the fear of God is not before their eyes.—Yet will we not ceaſe to ſeek the Lord, till he come and rain down righteouſneſs upon us.

I truſt, on this occaſion, I may, without offence—plead the cauſe of our African ſlaves; and humbly propoſe the purſuit of

some effectual measures, at least, to prevent the future importation of them.

Difficulties insuperable, I apprehend, prevent an adequate remedy for what is past.

Let the time past more than suffice, wherein we, the patrons of liberty, have dishonored the christian name,—and degraded human nature, nearly to a level with the beasts that perish.

Ethiopia has long stretched out her hands to us—Let not sordid gain, acquired by the merchandize of slaves, and the souls of men—harden our hearts against her piteous moans. When God ariseth, and when he visiteth, what shall we answer!

May it be the glory of this province—of this respectable General Assembly—and we could wish, of this session, to lead in the cause of the oppressed.—This will avert the impending vengeance of heaven—procure you the blessing of multitudes of your fellow men ready to perish—be highly approved by our common Father, who is no respecter of persons,—and we trust, an example which would excite the highest attention of our sister colonies.

May

May we all, both rulers and people, in this day of doubtful expectation, know and practice the things of our peace—and serve the Lord our God without disquiet, in the inheritance which he granted unto our fathers.

These adventurous worthies, animated by sublimer prospects, dearly purchased this land with their treasure.—They and their posterity have defended it with unknown cost,*—in continual jeopardy of their lives—and with their blood.

Thro' the good hand of our God upon us, we have for a few years past been delivered from the merciless sword of the wilderness, and enjoyed peace in our borders—and there is in the close of our short summer the appearance of plenty in our dwellings; but from the length of our winters, our plenty is consumed, and the one half of our necessary labour is spent in dispersing to our flocks and herds, the ingatherings of the foregoing season: And it is known to every person of common observation, that few—very few, except in the mercantile way,—

* Be it far from me, O Lord, said the ancient Hero, that I should do this; is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it.—Will not the like sentiments rise in a generous mind, thrust into our possessions?——

from one generation to another, acquire more than a neceſſary ſubſiſtence, and ſufficient to diſcharge the expences of government, and the ſupport of the goſpel—yet content, and diſpoſed to lead peaceable lives.

From miſinformations, only, we would conclude, recent diſquiets have ariſen—they need not be mentioned—they are too well known——their voice is gone out thro' all the earth—and their ſound to the end of the world.——The enemies of Great-Britain hold us in deriſion—while her cities and colonies are thus perplexed.

America now pleads her right to her poſſeſſions—which ſhe cannot reſign, while ſhe apprehends ſhe has truth and juſtice on her ſide.

Americans eſteem it their greateſt infelicity, that thro' neceſſity, they are thus led to plead with their parent ſtate—the land of their fore-father's nativity, whoſe intereſt has always been dear to them*—and whoſe wealth they have increaſed by their removal, much more than their own.

They

* Their loſſes, and private expences, in watches, guards and garriſons for their defence, and from continual alarms—in all their former wars—have greatly exceeded the public charges.

They have aſſiſted in fighting her battles, and greatly enlarged her empire—and God helping, will yet extend it thro' the boundleſs deſart, untill it reach from ſea to ſea.

They glory in the Britiſh conſtitution, and are abhorrent, to a man, of the moſt diſtant thought of withdrawing their allegiance from their gracious Sovereign, and becoming an independent ſtate.

And tho' with unwearied toil, the coloniſts can now ſubſiſt upon the labors of their own hands—which they muſt be driven to, when deprived of the means of purchaſe,—yet they are fully ſenſible of the mutual benefits of an equitable commerce with the parent country; and chearfully ſubmit to regulations of trade, productive of the common intereſt.

Theſe their claims, the Americans conſider, not as novel, or wantonly made, but, founded in nature—in compact—in their right as men—and Britiſh ſubjects——The ſame which their fore-fathers, the firſt occupants made, and aſſerted, as the terms of their removal with their effects into this wilder-

neſs

neſs *—and with which the glory and intereſt of their King, and all his dominions, are connected.

May theſe alarming diſputes be brought to a juſt and ſpeedy iſſue—and peace and harmony be reſtored.

But, while in imitation of our pious forefathers, we are aiming at the ſecurity of our liberties; we ſhould all be concerned to expreſs, by our conduct, their piety and virtue. And in a day of darkneſs, and general diſtreſs,—carefully avoid every thing offenſive to God, or injurious to men.

It belongs not only to rulers—but ſubjects alſo, to ſet the Lord always before their face, and act in his fear.

While under government, we claim a right to be treated as men;—we muſt act in character, by yielding that ſubjection which becometh us as men.

Let every attempt to ſecure our liberties be conducted with a manly fortitude; but with

* It is apprehended, a greater ſacrifice of private intereſt to the public good, both of Great-Britain and the Colonies, hath at no time been made, than that of the patriotic merchants, of this, and all the conſiderable colonies, by their non-importation agreement——And whatever the effects may be, their names will be remembered with gratitude to the lateſt generations, by all true friends to Britain and her Colonies.

with that reſpectful decency, which reaſon approves, and which alone gives weight to the moſt ſalutary meaſures.

Let nothing divert us from the paths of truth and peace, which are the ways of God——and then we may be ſure that he will be with us as he was with our fathers ---and never leave nor forſake us.

Our Fathers, where are they?--They looked for another and better country, that is an heavenly. They were but as ſojourners here; and have long ſince reſigned theſe their tranſitory abodes, and are ſecurely ſeated in manſions of glory.——They hear not the voice of the oppreſſor.

We alſo are all ſtrangers on earth; and muſt ſoon, without diſtinction, lie down in the duſt; and riſe not, till theſe heavens and earth are no more.

May we all realize the appearance of the Son of God, to judge the world in righteouſneſs;---and improve the various talents committed to our truſt; that we may then lift up our heads with joy---and thro' grace, receive an inheritance which cannot be taken away---even life everlaſting.

AMEN.

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Our fathers, where are they?—They look-ed for another and better country, that is ab-ſtract only. They were but as ſojourners here; and have long ſince reſigned their tranſitory abodes, and are eternally ſeated in manſions of glory.——They hear not the voice of the oppreſſor.

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A M E N.

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